

large extent, the less well-to-do citizens. The tax, as currently structured, 6 percent of the gross goes to the state, 2 percent goes to cities, and in a very few instances counties. What my bill would do is eliminate the 2 percent tax to the cities and reduce the 3 percent that goes to the...the 6 percent that goes to the state to 3 percent, thereby putting bingo on, not even an even keel with other gaming activities, but at the upper end still at 3 percent. This is simply a matter of fairness. It's simply something that we, as a Legislature, ought to do to make bingo a more profitable activity. This is an activity, it's not like slots, it's not like keno even to a great extent, this is primarily a recreational activity where people sit down, they socialize, and as a great side benefit it provides revenue, in some cases, as a matter of fact, about half the bingo games in the state lose money, in some cases it provides revenue to charities to do good works. The reason that I'm eliminating the 2 percent that cities get is because it was originally instituted, the city tax was originally instituted about 15 years ago when cities had a great deal of responsibility for the regulation and policing of bingo games. Since then, the state, by statute, has assumed that responsibility. Through the Department of Revenue and the Division of Charitable Gaming that city responsibility has been completely removed and the 2 percent tax that we are giving the cities is a gift. It's a free gift, that's all it is. They have other general taxing authority, as we all know, in the areas of property tax, a local option sales tax, and local option fees. And at this point, I believe that we can't justify giving the cities 2 percent of the gross of every bingo game played in the state of Nebraska. I'd eliminate that and I'd cut the state tax in half because it's just too high, it's simply too high. The state doesn't need 6 percent of the gross of bingo games in order to operate the charitable gaming division, which is where the tax goes. For that reason we ought to adopt this...or advance this bill to Select File, we ought to pass this bill. The committee amendment didn't go, so we're also increasing the tax on keno, which is something that I would be willing to talk about on Select File. But at this point this is a bill that out of sheer equity and out of the simple fact that we have an abominably high tax on bingo we ought to advance this. With that I would give the remainder of my time to Senator Hilgert.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Hilgert.